X. — *The Variant Runes on the Franks Casket.*

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Until 1896 Germanic scholars, with few exceptions, acknowledged Wimmer's doctrine as to the origin of the runes (cf. Sievers in Paul's *Grundriss*, I., p. 246; new edition, p. 257). Wimmer held that the runes, the earliest letters used by Germanic peoples, were an adaptation of the late Latin alphabet, and that this adaptation was made deliberately by some one person who aimed to provide his countrymen with a means of writing. In a paper published in the volume of *Philologische Studien*, issued in the fall of 1896 as a 'Festgabe für Eduard Sievers,' I showed the untenableness of this position, and urged that the Germanic alphabet, like other ancient alphabets, had a natural and gradual growth and was not the artificial product of one man's devising. My position is now largely accepted (cf. Streitberg, *Literarisches Centralblatt*, October 1, 1898, col. 1587, Hirt, *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, vol. 31, p. 419, etc.). In a paper published in 1899, in the *Journal of Germanic Philology*, vol. 2, p. 370, I made a brief report of my success in tracing the runes to the Western Greek alphabets, in other words, to an origin similar to that of the Latin alphabet. A full statement of my proofs and arguments is forthcoming.

Another common but erroneous idea as to the origin of the runes still needs correction. It is assumed that there was an original Germanic form of the runes, of which all other runic alphabets were offshoots, in much the same way as the Scandinavian and English languages are descendants of Germanic speech. That there were national variants of a more common form of the runes, no one will deny. It is also true that there is a tendency for writing to adapt itself to the phonological changes of a language. Still, we must be careful not to assume that the development of forms of

writing corresponded to the development of speech. Writing is not speech, neither is it any part of it. It is only a means, — and a very poor means — of representing speech. It may pass from one dialect to another, and, on the other hand, divers forms may be adopted by communities speaking the same dialect. In this way numerous variant forms of writing arise, but not all persist. Some one form that has some peculiar advantage, as that of being used more extensively, or that of being employed in a state that has political or other supremacy, is likely to crowd out more local or provincial forms. We know that, in the history of the runes, various forms have arisen and succumbed, but we have assumed that there was a time when there was but one universal system. It is my aim in this paper to show that this is an error, and that in the beginning more than one form of Greek writing passed over to the Germanic peoples, just as to the races of Italy, and that, in the struggle that ensued, some succeeded in maintaining themselves and crowding others out. In order to do this I shall present for consideration one of the less successful forms that was thus crowded out.

Parts of a casket, variously called the Franks casket and the Clermont casket, have been in the British Museum for something like half a century. More recently a missing side has come to light in Florence. Within the past year, Professor Wadstein of Gotenburg, Professor Napier of Oxford, and Professor Viëtor of Marburg, have published *fac similes* and discussions of the engravings and inscriptions on this casket. These various publications[1] I have been asked to review for *Anglia*. In the present paper I desire to consider only the peculiar runes that the casket presents.

Most of the runes in the various inscriptions on the casket are like, or nearly like, those found in other Old-English

[1] The Clermont Runic Casket, by Elis Wadstein, Upsala, Lundström, Leipzig, Harrassowitz, 1900; The Franks Casket, by A. S. Napier, in An English Miscellany, Oxford, Clarendon Press, New York, The Oxford University Press, 1901; Ett Engelskt Fornminne fran 700-Talet och Englands Dåtida Kultur, af Elis Wadstein, Göteborg, Zachrissons, 1901; The Anglo-Saxon Runic Casket, by Wilhelm Viëtor, Marburg, Elwert, 1901. The last is printed in German and English in parallel columns.

runic inscriptions, but on one side (most of which is in Florence and but a small piece in London) we find for the vowels numerous signs which are not found elsewhere. They are these: —

a *æ* *e* *i* *o* *u*

The values of all but the last have been made out by various scholars. The *u* has not hitherto been understood.

Napier (pp. 371, 373, ft. 5) speaks of the letters as arbitrary signs, and believes that the engraver was not much accustomed to use them; Viëtor (p. 7) refers to them as rather puzzling ciphers probably invented for the purpose. This is an error. In fact, it would be difficult to conceive why arbitrary signs should have been introduced for some of the letters in such an inscription. Wadstein's position is more nearly correct. He (pp. 46, 47) regards the variant characters as runes "of rather young date, and doubtless never very much used." As to origin, he supposes them to be derived in part from other runes, in part from Latin letters, but he makes no very serious effort to explain them. The *i*-rune he regards as a variant of the usual *i*-rune, "probably made thus in order to render the rune more distinct when carved on wood along the grain." This is quite out of the question. The whole development of the runes proves that they were usually written with the upright shafts perpendicular to the grain, so that such upright shafts were favored and horizontal bars were avoided. The *e*-rune he derives from uncial Є, and of the *a*-rune and the *æ*-rune he says vaguely that they "seem to be modifications of the *āc*- and *æsc*-runes (or of an A-letter)." The *o*-rune he regards as "a simplification of the *ōs*-rune; cf. the *ōs*-characters in Stephens' work I., p. 116, No. 9 and p. 118, Nos. 53, 57." At first, I too thought the *o*-rune might be a modification of the usual OE. *o*-rune with loss of one cross bar, but this would give us ᚨ ᚩ ᚬ. We find, however, that the cross bar always runs the other way, and the first shaft is always short below, both of which phenomena are accounted for by the explanation given on page 190. It is strange that Wadstein should

refer to Stephens' tables as though they could be used *ohne weiteres* as authority. Every form given by him must first be sought for in the original, and judged accordingly. For example, the forms cited by Wadstein are from Old-English manuscript alphabets, which, as I shall show in a forthcoming treatise on the subject, were, for the most part, copied by men of an antiquarian turn of mind but wholly ignorant of what they were copying. In this way the forms have become perverted and their values confused. Strange to say, two of the three characters cited by Wadstein are imperfect copies of the old *ōþil*-rune and not of the *ōs*-rune at all. Thus 53 (a thirteenth century Ms.) has ᛝ, a miscopying of ᛟ with the upper strokes too long; and 57 (a Ms. alphabet of about 1500) has ᛯ, such a triangular form of the *ōþil*-rune as is referred to below (p. 190).

It will be observed that the letters in question are those that represent the vowels, and it was in the vowels that the phonology of Old English had its most peculiar development. Indeed, it is just here that the ordinary Old-English runes differ most widely from those of other Germanic peoples. The development of the ordinary Old-English runes for the vowels and its relation to the development of the Old-English vowels themselves I have explained in an article in *Modern Language Notes* for June, 1896. Now, it is not difficult to show that we have in the new runes of the Franks casket only another such Old-English development, differing from the ordinary development chiefly in that it is not a variety of the usual runic system but goes back to an early system parallel with that.

The *u* (ᚢ), occurring in the word *agu*, 'magpie,' the bird depicted as flying about in the forest, varies but a trifle from the usual *u* (ᚢ). Its development out of the latter is similar to the development of ᚦ out of ᚦ and that of ᚠ out of ᚠ.

The *i*, which appears four times as ᛊ, once with an extra stroke below, and once with still another added to that, is simply the old Greek broken *iota* (ᛊ or ᛊ). The increase and the irregularity of the number of strokes is familiar to

us in the case of *s*, for example, in inscriptions from Laconia and Naucratis, and in the Abu-Simbel inscription, as well as in early Scandinavian runic inscriptions. Viëtor erroneously (as I shall show in my review in *Anglia*) sees in the forms with five or six strokes ligatures of *si* and *is*.

The *o*, which appears as ᛋᛏ and as ᛋ, is a modification and simplification of the old rune for *o*. The development was probably as follows: ᛟ *ᛏ ᛋᛏ. That is, the letter acquired vertical shafts like most of the other runes (just as *s* changed from ᛊ to ᛋ in Old English, and the broken *iota* ᛊ became ᛋ in Melos and the Achaian colonies in Italy, and ᛋ, with the value *j*, in runic, cf. Charnay, Istaby, etc.); and one of the parallel oblique lines was dropped (as in ᚺ for ᚻ and in many other cases). Or a triangular ᚷ, like that preserved in the Gothic *o*, may have been an intermediate form. Compare the development of our number four from ᚷ to ᛋᛏ.

For the *e*-rune two explanations are possible. It is most likely that the development was parallel to that of *f*. As ᚠ became ᚠ, so ᛖ became ᛖ (as in Greek inscriptions from Amorgos, Naucratis, etc.; cf. also Cyrillic ᛖ); and, by simplification, *ᚦ,[1] just as ᚻ became ᚺ and ᚺ in Greece, etc., and ᚻ became ᚹ in Crete, and ᚹ became ᛁᚹ ᛁᛚ ᛁ in Latin cursive. Still, it is possible that *ᚦ may have arisen out of an ᚲ ᛖ, compare Cumaean ᛖ ᚴ and Latin cursive ᛖ ᚠ ᚦ. The change of *ᚦ to ᚦ is exactly parallel to the change seen in *n*: ᚾ ᚺ (as in various Italic alphabets) *ᚦ ᚦ (for the loss of one shaft in the runic *n*, cf. the change of ᚺ to ᚦ in Tarentine Ionic), cf. also the change of *gamma* ᚱ to ᛉ in the alphabet of Safa. The similarity of the two letters ᚦ *n* and ᚧ *e* led to a further differentiation, namely, in direction, thus: ᚷ *n* and ᚷ *e*, — though this violated the general tendency toward perpendicular shafts.

The *a* (ᚺ) appears to be a direct descendant of Greek ᚨ or ᚪ, in the simplified form ᚬ, ᚭ, or ᚨ. Similarly in early Latin and in Pompeian cursive we find ᚬ and ᚨ by the side of the

[1] Oscan ᚦ probably had a similar origin. That is, ᚿ became ᚾ + ᚦ, on the analogy of which there was formed ᛘ, later ᛘ and ᛁᛚ. Cf. Conway, *Italic Dialects*, II., p. 463, I., p. 79.

three-stroke forms. Cf. Ulfilas' ᚭ and the similar breaking in the ᚿ of various Greek and Italic alphabets for ᚨ, also the development of runic *u*: ᚢ ᚣ ᚤ ᚥ (Thames Fitting, Stephens III, p. 204, *Handbook*, p. 147).

The *æ* (ᚣ) is evidently only a variant of ᚥ, and was doubtless differentiated from it after the Germanic *a* had broken up into Old-English *a* and *æ*. Compare the differentiation of *v* and *u* and of *i* and *j*.

That the variant runes of the Franks casket had a natural development, there can thus be no doubt. Admitting this, we are confronted by a question of importance. We have seen that our scribe employs both sets of runes and is evidently quite at home in the use of both.[1] It would, however, seem likely that one of the two systems was natural to him, and that he later acquired the other. As we know that the common forms crowded out the rare ones thus far found only in this inscription, it is reasonable to assume that these latter belong to the writer's natural hand, but that he had also learned the other forms, and that they were already in his day encroaching upon the rarer ones. That this assumption is correct can easily be proved. We have seen that the usual *n* ᚾ appears as ᛯ to differentiate it the more clearly from *e* ᛮ. Now, our scribe employs this oblique form of *n* not only in the inscription in which he uses the peculiar runes, but also, with absolute uniformity, in those inscriptions in which he has adopted the usual forms, even consistently turning it to ᛮ where he writes from right to left. He evidently did not regard his natural oblique *n* (ᛯ) as sufficiently different from the intruding upright *n* (ᚾ) to need to yield to that. In exactly the same way, Americans, in learning to write the German script, permit themselves to retain certain forms of the English hand that differ but slightly from those of the German. Just as they thereby betray the fact that the English hand is their natural hand,

[1] Napier (p. 373, ft. 5) argues that the "arbitrary vowel-runes" were new to the engraver as evinced by several assumed errors in their use. Viëtor too (p. 8) assumes "the carver for once to have mistaken his new runes." In the review mentioned above I shall show that in most of the cases referred to there *is* no error.

so our scribe, by retaining his natural *n* (even in *enberig*, *grornþær*, *unneg*, etc., where the erect form would have fitted in better between the neighboring letters), has betrayed the fact that the rarer runes belong to his natural hand and that, when he uses the usual runes, he is adopting forms that were then encroaching upon the usage of his home.

The conclusions that we have thus been able to draw from our inscription are of importance, not only to the history of Old-English runes, but also to the history of runes in general, and thus to that of the Western Greek alphabets. We have seen that the succumbing hand retained the broken Greek *iota* with the value of *i*. In the usual runic system the two forms of *iota* have become differentiated, so that the broken one stood for *j* (cf. p. 190 above) and the straight one for *i*. This differentiation is a part of the 3×8 formulation of the futhark, and this formulation was regarded by Wimmer as original, and is probably still generally regarded as common Germanic. In the article referred to above (*Wimmers Runenlehre* in *Philologische Studien*) I proved by argumentation that this formulation could not have been original. In our inscription we now find the historic evidence that there once was a highly developed system of runic writing in use in northern England that was independent of this formulation and maintained itself until a comparatively late date, that is, until after the time of *i*-mutation and the development (in other Old-English territory) of the runes ᚨ *a* and ᚩ *o* out of ᚪ *ai* and ᚫ *an* (*Modern Language Notes*, June, 1896) and of ᚳ *c* out of the ᚣ and ᚲ *c* of earlier inscriptions. This establishes the position taken by me (*Journal of Germanic Philology*, II., p. 374, etc.), that the 3×8 formulation was made in some one locality and then extended to others. Attention must also be called to the fact that the *e* in the isolated system is a development of an erect Greek Ε, while the *e* (ᛖ ᛗ ᛘ) of other runic systems arose out of a prone Greek Π. We have also seen that the variant runes for *a* and *æ* had a development independent of that of the usual rune ᚨ. Similar diversity is found in the earlier stages of other alphabets. It was but yesterday that we were taught

that the Latin alphabet of the republic must be derived (except for G) from some one Greek alphabet having all the same characteristics. We now know that it was the resultant of various rival forms of Greek alphabets, and that H R and V prevailed only after a struggle with ⊟ P and Y, all of which were once in use in Rome. In a forthcoming paper (read at the Philological Congress at Philadelphia in December, 1900) on the Praenestine Cista at Paris, I have shown that O and Ω were both in use in Praeneste, and were differentiated, not as close and open[1] *o* as in the Ionic alphabet, but as open and close *o*, as in the alphabets of Delos, Paros, Siphnos, Thasos, etc.

The diversities that I have pointed out in the development of the runes, indisputably establish my contention that the Greek letters came to the Germanic peoples as they did to the Italians. Various forms came in and vied with one another, the weaker succumbing sooner or later to the stronger. We have not yet arrived at the point where we can see just when and how the Greek letters passed to the Germanic peoples, but every bit of new evidence is against the theory of their artificial construction, and brings the history of their development into harmony with what we know of the development of other ancient alphabets.

I may add that Napier is in error in saying (p. 371 ft.) that the variant *æ*-rune is identical with the *c*-rune used on the other side of the casket. The variant *æ*-rune is ᛣ (not ᚴ) and the *c*-rune is ᚴ, and this distinction is carefully made in every case. Vietor (p. 8) is also in error in supposing that

[1] It is high time that scholars cease to speak of O and Ω as having been used to distinguish the short and the long sounds of *o*. It has been repeatedly pointed out that the Greeks did not attempt to indicate quantity (witness α ι υ), but did largely distinguish the open and the close *o* and the open and the close *e*. Thus O represented the *o* in *poetic*, Ω the *o* in *or*, E represented the first *a* in *aerial*, H the *a* in *care*. That the close vowels were short and the open vowels long was an accident. Still, scholars that know better, continue to express themselves in a way (for example, "das Bedürfnis einer Differenzierung des langen und kurzen *o*-Lautes," Larfeld in Müller's *Handbuch*, I., p. 521) that can only result in misleading learners.

the variant *a*-rune is identical with the *c*-rune; they too are in all cases carefully distinguished. Vietor, who wishes to read ᚠ ᚷ ᚾ as *āglāc*, imagines our scribe in a truly pitiful plight. He says: "possibly the carver intended to put [translation of German *setzen*] AC, but, having used up the sign C as A, was at a loss what to do, or found the space was too narrow." I shall deal with this matter more fully in the review in *Anglia*.

Napier errs also in supposing that, when the scribe uses the ordinary runes ᚱ (in the ligature ᚯ *fa*) and ᛗ *e* among the variant runes, he is using them not in their ordinary values but as arbitrary signs for some other sounds. (Napier was probably led to this idea by supposing that the variant *æ*-rune was only the ordinary *c*-rune with an arbitrary value.) No violence is done by supposing the letters to have their normal values, and it is not at all strange that a scribe who used two different sets of letters in one and the same piece should have let two of one system slip in among the others. I have done so myself many a time in writing a passage of English after writing one of German or Greek. In the case of *sǣrden*, the scribe may have been unwittingly led to use ᛗ in contrast to the following ᚷ *n*. Vietor (p. 9) suggests that the rune may be "a disfigured *u*." One is tempted to see a *u* in the letter in as much as *sǣrdun* is the older form, the more so as I have shown that the engraver's natural *u* was ᚾ and the *e* in *afitatores* appears in Napier's *fac simile* in almost exactly this form. One might suppose that the engraver had to some extent confused his natural ᛖ *u* and his acquired ᛗ *e*. Vietor's *fac simile* of *afitatores*, however, shows the letter to be an ᛖ without question, and careful examination of the various *fac similes* makes it certain that we have the same rune in *sǣrden*. We must, therefore, see in *sǣrden* the not uncommon Northumbrian coincidence of the preterit indicative with the preterit subjunctive (Sievers, § 364, A 4).

I said above that it would not be strange if a scribe who used two different sets of letters on one and the same piece should have let some of one system slip in among those of

the other. We have a similar case[1] on the back panel of this very casket. The scribe was translating from the Latin, and had writen in runes *Her fegtaþ Titus end Giuþeas*, when he came to the subordinate clause (describing the second half of the picture) *ut hic fugiant Hierusalim habitatores.* By mistake, he began to copy this in Latin instead of translating it — but continued to write in runic! When he had got his *u* written as ᚢ, he discovered his mistake and, while continuing in Latin, used Latin letters. The T he placed in the blank space under the central ornament above the arch, *hic fugiant Hierusalim*, follows along the upper right-hand edge. When he turned the panel and completed the sentence, he again slipped and wrote the Latin word in runes!

A few words as to what the inscription does *not* give us. There was no occasion for a sign for *þ* or *η*, and, of course, none for the old *z*-rune; hence none of these occur. X is used for both the voiced and the voiceless fricatives, standing thus on a par with ᚠ, ᚳ, and ᚦ. ᛇ therefore does not appear for *χ*,[2] and ᚺ is used only for the initial breathing. The only word in which we might expect a *j*-rune is the name of the Jews, which appears as *giuþeas*. Here we find both X and I employed to represent *j*, and we may infer that the runic system natural to the engraver had no special letter for the sound. ᚯ appears twice for *œ*, and ᚣ once for *y*, but neither in the inscription with the variant runes. In this there was also no occasion for the use of the runes for *l* and *c*. It is particularly unfortunate that the scribe did not have an opportunity to show us what forms the runes for *c*, *η*, and *þ* had in his native hand. We are so much in need of further information as to the development of these runes, that one cannot but seriously regret that this unique monument does not render us in these particulars the aid it does in others.

[1] Burg (cf. Vietor, p. 10) deserves credit for the suggestion that the ᚢ was "a corruption of ut" and that *fugiant* was a subjunctive dependent upon it. I found the T and the explanation of the confusion of English and Latin and of runes and uncials.

[2] On a subsequent occasion I shall show that Sievers was right in suggesting *h* as the normal value of ᛇ, though it was later used for *χ* too.